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Perception of Knowledge Management among LIS Professionals: a survey of Central Universities in North India

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to explore the perception of Library and Information Science professionals in central universities about Knowledge Management and its integration into library practices.

The study is conducted through survey by using a web-based questionnaire. A well-structured both close and open ended questionnaire was administered to 75 LIS professionals who had been working in different central university libraries in North Indian States. The findings of the study indicate that LIS professionals' attitudes about KM varied from one another and their understanding of KM concepts also differed from person to person. But, the majority of them were of the view that KM provides enormous opportunities for LIS Professionals. The paper presents an overview of the perception of knowledge management among LIS professionals, and commends that KM skills should be imparted among LIS professionals so that they can stretch their understanding, change their long lived schemas, and to apply a rounded approach to design of KM system and library practice.

Keywords- Knowledge Management; Libraries; Library and Information Science professionals; Perception; North India; Survey.

Article type- Research paper

INTRODUCTION

The launch of the concept *Knowledge Management* (KM) can be traced from the last decade of the 20th century, when it begins and faddish in the business world. Business world recognized the momentous of knowledge in the *global economy* of the *knowledge age*. In the new *knowledge economy*, the custody of important and tactical knowledge and its interminable regeneration empower corporate sector to addendum competitive profits. The applications of knowledge management have now reached to other sectors, encompassing Universities, Governmental units, Research and Development section etc. (Lee, 2005).

Knowledge management (KM) is “a collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge in an organization” (Newman, 1991). According to IFLA, KM is “a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and reusing (transforming) organisational knowledge to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives”. It includes the management of explicit knowledge (i.e. knowledge that has been codified in databases, web pages, documents, etc.) and sharing of tacit knowledge (i.e. skills, expertise, or know-how) (Ajiferuke, 2003). In libraries and information centers, explicit knowledge is created inside the organization, such as minutes of meetings, theses, memos guidelines, reports, etc. or obtained from extrinsic sources, including databases, books, government information, journal articles, etc. However, tacit knowledge, embedded in minds of workers with a comprehensive knowledge of rules and regulations, work procedures, etc. (Wijetunge, 2002). Tacit and explicit knowledge, both is deliberate as the most important sources of knowledge of a library, the management of which should be done with utmost care and should be the prime motto of any library (Ajiferuke, 2003).

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND LIBRARIANSHIP: PERCEPTION OF LIS COMMUNITY

Different library and information science (LIS) professionals perceive KM differently, and the present literature suggests that there is no worldwide consent of how and to what level knowledge management is linked to library and information science.

Most of the authors consider KM as an oxymoron (Broadbent, 1998), a nonsense management whim (Wilson, 2002) and some of the scholars sees it as a method of management (Shanhong, 2000). According to (Koenig, 1997; Davenport and Prusak; 1998) define KM as librarianship

or information management by another name (Koenig, 1997; Davenport and Prusak; 1998). In spite of a link between information management and knowledge management, many scholars made an attempt to differentiate KM from librarianship and information management (Morris, 2001; Todd, and Southon, 2001). Many scholars perceived that KM is an old concept (Hawkins, 2000) and a new name for what library professionals have been doing for years (Ajiferuke, 2003; Townley, 2001). Roknuzzaman and Umemoto (2009) delineate knowledge management as librarianship in new clothes (Roknuzzaman and Umemoto, 2009).

Several studies have focused on attitude of Library professional about the knowledge management and its implementation in libraries and information centres. According to Nazim and Mukherji (2013) there is a variation in the understanding level of the KM concept among librarians (Husain, and Nazim, 2013), but the majority of them had positive attitude towards KM and its integration in libraries and information centers (Roknuzzaman and Umemoto, 2009). Although, attitudes towards knowledge management were not linked with librarians' experience and no sector wise and gender wise major differences were examined in librarians' attitudes (Rahmatullah and Mahmood, 2013). The majority of library professionals considers that KM creates new job opportunities and also helps in the development of libraries and the LIS profession itself (Sarrafzadeh, Martin, and Hazeri, 2006). According to Siddike and Munshi (2012) in their study found that, a large majority earliest read knowledge management in the literature and nobody has done any course related to KM. Although, most of the respondents seemed that knowledge management is another management vogue like total quality management and half of the respondents sees knowledge management as a new concept for the library professionals who were already doing (Siddike and Islam, 2011).

So, despite of a wide range of perceptions and attitudes of library professionals towards KM, most of the researchers view KM from more positive viewpoints and encourage LIS Professionals to get fully involved in the process of KM (Roknuzzaman and Umemoto, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the perception of library professionals towards the Knowledge Management, how they see to it and its implementation in the development and progress of libraries. The following are the major objectives of the present study:

- To explore the perception of LIS professionals of central universities in North Indian states towards KM

- To express the LIS Professionals on KM is just another fad like TQM
- To identify the views of LIS Professionals on Information Management is just another aspect of Knowledge Management
- To examine the opportunities and threats for LIS Professionals as emerged from the origin of KM

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To explore the perception of knowledge management from the viewpoints of various LIS professionals, a web-based questionnaire using *freeonlinesurvey.com* was designed for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire contained 12 statements to be measured on five-point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree; 5- Strongly Agree) developed by Maryam Sarrafzadeh.

SAMPLE POPULATION

Representative population for the present study was LIS professionals working in central universities of north Indian states. LIS professionals in central universities who were having at least Master degree in Library Science and were working either as Assistant Librarians, Deputy Librarians or University Librarian in the libraries, were chosen for the present study.

The stratified random sampling method was used to identify the libraries with the following criteria as:

- ✓ Those Central Universities having library website.
- ✓ Those libraries, which have mention e-mail ID of librarians in their websites.

There are total 16 central universities in the north Indian states, of which 5 universities (newly established) could not be contacted because of lack of their university websites and e-mail addresses. These universities were excluded from the study. Following are the central universities of north Indian states undertaken for the present study

1. Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
2. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow
3. Banaras Hindu University, Banaras
4. Central University of Bihar, Patna
5. Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh

6. Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Kangra
7. Central University of Kashmir, Ganderbal
8. Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi
9. Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
10. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
11. University of Delhi, New Delhi

All the University librarians, deputy librarians and assistant librarians were considered for the study to get maximum accuracy in the results. So, census sampling method was used as there was no selection of sample as the whole population was included in the study. A total of 75 LIS professionals working in 11 Central Universities were contacted to be a part in the study through e-mail. Information about the central universities was collected from the website of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (<http://mhrd.gov.in/central-universities-0>). Institutional websites further guided towards contacts of LIS professionals (Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Assistant Librarian) working in those central universities. 48 out of 75, LIS professionals were responded to the survey after getting email reminders, telephonic calls and personal visits.

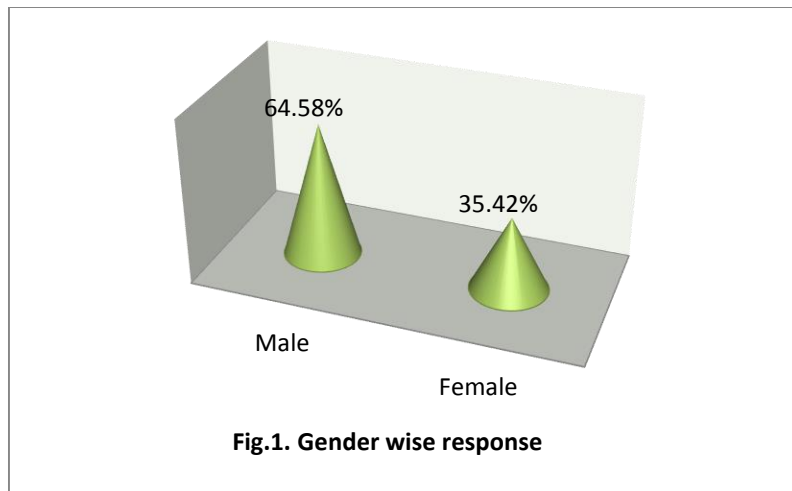
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data which were collected from the library professionals of central universities of north Indian states through a web-based questionnaire, have been organized, analyzed, tabulated and interpreted by using tables of percentages. On the basis of the responses received through web-based questionnaires the data is analyzed and interpreted, in the following headings:

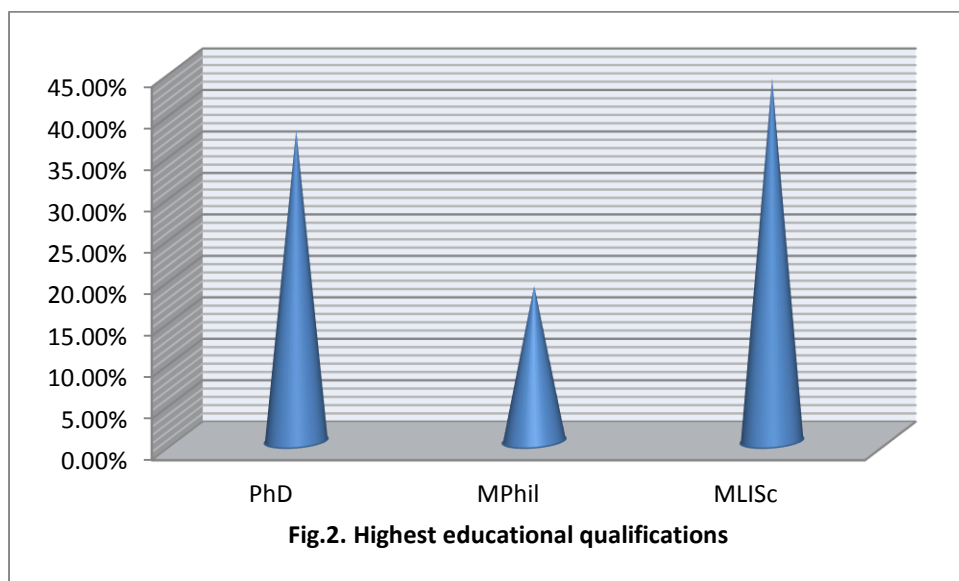
Background of Respondents (n=48)

➤ Gender wise response

Majority of respondents' i.e. (64.58%) are male and (35.42%) respondents are female (See fig. 1.). Which is not surprising as the profession is dominated by male library professionals.



➤ **Highest educational qualifications**



In terms of educational background, the majority (43.75%) respondents have a MLISc in Library and Information Science. In addition to the qualification (37.50%) respondents have PhD and (18.75%) respondents have MPhil in Library and Information Science.

➤ **Awareness of LIS Professionals about Knowledge Management**

In this section, investigators want to know the cognizance of LIS professionals about KM. whether they all are aware about KM or not, because this study explores the attitude of LIS Professionals about KM.

Table I. Awareness of LIS Professionals about Knowledge Management

Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	48	100%
No	0	0

Table I reveal that in response to the question “do you know about KM” all (cent percent) respondents said ‘yes’ to the question that means they all are aware about the concept of KM.

➤ **Preferred definitions of Knowledge Management**

Investigators have selected a wide spectrum of definitions of Knowledge Management. Respondents were asked to choose that definition which is most appropriate according to them.

Table II. Preferred definitions of KM by LIS Professionals

Definitions of KM	Definition Code	No.of Respondents	Percentage
The acquisition, sharing and use of knowledge within organization, including learning processes and management information systems.	D1	15	31.25%
The creation and subsequent management of an environment which encourages knowledge to be created, shared and learnt, enhanced, organized, for the benefit of the organization and its customers.	D2	15	31.25%
The process of capturing value, knowledge and understanding of corporate information using IT systems in order to maintain, re-use and re-deploy that knowledge.	D3	12	25.00%
The capability of an organization to create new knowledge, disseminate it and embody it in products, services and systems.	D4	6	12.50%

Table II, depicts the percentage of the most preferred definition of the KM by LIS professionals. 31.25 percent of respondents marked two definitions of KM as most appropriate

definition (D1) and (D2) respectively. 25 percent of respondents marked definition (D3) as most appropriate and only 12.5 percent of respondents marked fourth definition (D4) as the most appropriate definition among the others.

➤ Perception of LIS Professionals about Knowledge Management

In this part, LIS professionals were asked to indicate how much they agreed and disagreed about some statements on a five point rating scale. The statements were based on the past literature.

Table III. Perceptions of LIS professionals, ratings on five dimensions

Category of perception about KM	Respondents ratings				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
KM is just another management fad like Total Quality Management	9 (18.75%)	12 (25%)	Nil 0	24 (50%)	3 (6.25%)
KM is a new term for what LIS Professionals have always done	3 (6.25%)	9 (18.75%)	Nil 0	27 (56.25%)	9 (18.75%)
It is hard to tell the difference between Information Management and Knowledge Management	9 (18.75%)	15 (31.25%)	6 (12.5%)	18 (37.5%)	Nil 0
KM can help make libraries more relevant to their parent organization and their user	3 (6.25%)	Nil 0	Nil 0	21 (43.75%)	24 (50%)
Information Management is just another aspect of knowledge management	3 (6.25%)	12 (25%)	3 (6.25%)	24 (50%)	6 (12.5%)
KM is a threat to the status and future of the LIS profession	12 (25%)	24 (50%)	3 (6.25%)	9 (18.75%)	Nil 0
KM has increased job opportunities for LIS Professionals	Nil 0	6 (12.5%)	3 (6.25%)	27 (56.25%)	12 (25%)
KM can encourage LIS Professionals to gain new skills	Nil 0	Nil 0	3 (6.25%)	36 (75%)	9 (18.75%)
LIS Professionals should focus on their own Competencies and ignore KM	6 (12.5%)	12 (25%)	6 (12.5%)	18 (37.5%)	6 (12.5%)
KM can contribute to an improvement in the future prospects of libraries	Nil 0	Nil 0	6 (12.5%)	33 (68.75%)	9 (18.75%)

Knowledge management can help to improve collaboration within different unit of the library	Nil 0	12 (25%)	3 (6.25%)	27 (56.25%)	6 (12.5%)
LIS Professional bodies should make the Promotion of KM a priority	Nil 0	6 (12.5%)	6 (12.5%)	27 (56.25%)	9 (18.75%)

❖ **KM is just another management fad like TQM**

A total of 56.25 percent of respondents agreed (combining agree and strongly agree) with the statement that *KM is just another fad like Total Quality Management* as shown in Table III. Only 25 percent of respondents disagreed and 18.75 percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the notion. Nobody has opted for the “*Don’t Know*” option. It is clear from the analysis that majority of the respondents believe that KM is just another whim like TQM.

❖ **KM is a new term for what LIS professionals have always done**

Majority (75 percent) of the respondents agreed with the statement, (combining agree and strongly agree) that *KM is a new term for what LIS Professional have always done* as shown in Table III .While 6.25 percent and 18.75 percent of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. From the analysis, It is understood that majority of the respondents perceives knowledge management as a new term for what LIS professional have always done.

❖ **Difference between Information Management and Knowledge Management**

Half of the participants (50 percent) disagreed (combining strongly disagree and disagree) with the notion as indicated in Table III. However, 37.5 percent of respondents agreed with the notion. Only 12.5 percent of respondents were opted for the “*Don’t Know*” option.

It is apparent from the analysis that there is a variation in the views of the respondents about the *difference between information management and knowledge management*. They were unable to perceive the difference between IM and KM. Some significant differences between KM and IM are:

- Unlike in KM, knowledge creation and knowledge sharing in IM is given less importance (Davenport, and Prusak, 1998);
- Unlike IM, KM deals with unarticulated/tacit knowledge (Koenig, 1997);
- KM deals with people; IM deals with objects (Sarrafzadeh, Martin, and Hazeri, 2006).

❖ **KM can help make libraries more relevant to their parent organization and their user**

A total of 93.75 percent of the respondents agreed (combining agree and strongly agree) with the statement that KM can help make libraries more relevant to their parent organization and their user as displayed in Table III. Only 6.25 percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

As cleared from the analysis that majority of library professionals sees benefits in knowledge management for the LIS profession. The ultimate goal of knowledge management within libraries is to integrate the available knowledge that may help academic librarians to carry out their tasks more efficiently and effectively (Maponya, 2004).

❖ **Information Management is just another aspect of Knowledge Management**

In response to the statement Information Management is just another aspect of knowledge management. A total of 62.5 percent of respondents agreed (combining agree and strongly agree) *that information management is just another aspect of knowledge management*. Moreover, 25 percent of respondents disagreed and 6.25 percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Only 6.25 percent of respondents choose “*Don’t know*” option. From the analysis, we can conclude that most of the respondents consider that information management is just another aspect of knowledge management.

❖ **KM is a threat to the status and future of the LIS profession**

A total of 75 percent of respondents disagreed (combining strongly disagree and disagree) with the statement that *KM is a threat to the status and future of the LIS profession* as shown in Table III. Only 18.75 percent of respondents agreed with the notion and 6.25 percent of respondents choose “*Don’t Know*” option. It is revealed after the analysis of data majority of library professionals strike down that KM is a threat to the status and future of the LIS profession.

❖ **KM has increased job opportunities for LIS Professionals**

It emerged that 81.25 percent of the respondents (combining agree and strongly agree) perceived that *KM has increased job opportunities for LIS Professionals* as shown in Table III. Only 12.5 percent of respondents disagreed and 6.25 percent respondents opted for “*Don’t Know*” option. Large majorities of the respondent strongly believe that KM has increased job opportunities for LIS professionals.

❖ **KM can encourage LIS Professionals to gain new skills**

In response to the statement KM can encourage LIS professionals to gain new skills a total 93.75 percent of respondents agreed (combining agree and strongly agree) that *KM can encourage LIS Professionals to gain new skills* as displayed in Table III. Only 6.25 percent of respondents opted for “*Don’t Know*” option, while no single respondents disagreed with the idea. From the analysis, it is clear that library professionals think that KM can encourage LIS Professionals to gain new skills.

❖ **LIS Professionals should focus on their own Competencies and ignore KM**

As demonstrated in Table III, in response to the *statement LIS Professionals should focus on their own Competencies and ignore KM*, 37.5 percent of respondents agreed and 12.5 percent respondents strongly agreed that LIS professionals should focus on their own Competencies and ignore KM. However a total 37.5 percent of respondents disagreed (combining disagree and strongly disagree) with the statement. Only 12.5 percent of respondents chose Don’t Know option. There are variations in the views of LIS professionals. Approximately half of the respondents perceived that library professionals should focus on their own Competencies and ignore KM.

❖ **KM can contribute to an improvement in the future prospects of libraries**

It is interesting that a total of 87.50 percent of respondents agreed (combining agree and strongly agree) statement *KM can contribute in the future prospects of libraries* as shown in Table III. Merely 12.5 percent respondents opted for the “*Don’t Know*”.

From the analysis, it is found that most of the respondents see KM can contribute to an in the future prospects of libraries.

❖ **KM can help to improve collaboration within different unit of the library**

A total of 68.75 percent of the respondents perceived that *KM can help to improve collaboration within different unit of the library* as displayed in Table III. Only 25 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement and 6.25 percent of respondents choose “*Don’t Know*” option. It is clear from the analysis most of the respondents believe that knowledge management can help to improve collaboration within different unit of the library.

❖ **LIS Professional bodies should make the promotion of KM a priority**

A total of 75 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that *LIS Professional bodies should make the promotion of KM a priority*, as demonstrated in Table III. Only 12.5 percent of respondents chose the “*Don’t Know*” option. It is observed from the

enquiry majority of the library professionals think that LIS professional bodies should make the promotion of KM a priority.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Following are the major findings of the study, carried out on the LIS professionals to find out their perception regarding the Knowledge Management.

- The study divulged that all the library and information science professionals are familiar with the concepts of Knowledge Management.
- There is an asunder diversification among the library professionals in perceiving knowledge management and majority of them sees KM as “The acquisition, sharing and use of knowledge within organization, including learning processes and management information systems”.
- Majority of LIS professionals are positively inclined towards KM and incorporation of KM practices in libraries can conglomerate libraries and their Parent organization.
- Majority of respondents seemed that knowledge management is another management whim like TQM.
- Most of the librarians strongly believe that KM offers enormous opportunities for LIS professionals and it encourages LIS professional to gain new skills.
- For many librarians, information management is another phase of knowledge management. KM is commonly garbled as an information management exercise of the library.
- A large majority perceived that knowledge management is not a threat to the status and future of libraries, but, it can enhance the future prospects of libraries and conjoin the different sections in the library.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of data and findings, following suggestions and recommendations are listed below

- The Government of India may take steps to frame KM policies for central university libraries in the country.

- Regular training programs/workshops or similar activities on KM may be organized by libraries to make awareness about knowledge management practices on regular intervals of time.
- There must be proper ICT equipments within the library system so that practices of knowledge management can be exploits in a better way.
- Library staff should be more qualified to handle knowledge management practices at full instance and there must be vestibule training programs for the library personnel.
- To encourage KM practices within the central university libraries, there must be proper incentives should pay for the librarians to create Knowledge sharing culture.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to explore the perception of LIS professionals working in central universities in north indian states about knowledge management. The results of the research show that most of the library professionals are aware about the concept of knowledge management. The perceptions of KM among LIS professionals vary from person to person, but they all are positively inclined towards KM. The majority of the respondents views that KM offers potential opportunities for LIS professionals and it can enhance the status of LIS professionals within the parent organization. In order to better exploit the KM practices within the library system, there must be training programs organized by the librarian related to KM to assist the library personnel. The limitation of the current study is that it was conducted only in north indian states. To generalize the impact of the findings, it is recommended that this study may replicate in all central universities of India, thus gaining a more thorough perception of KM among LIS community.

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